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SUBJECT: BELGIANS DISAPPOINTED AT USG DECISION TO NO LONGER  
PARTICIPATE IN THE UNHRC

REF: STATE 61034

¶1. (SBU) PolOff met June 9 with Francine Chainaye, MFA Director for Human Rights Affairs, to discuss points in reftel. Chainaye said the Belgians know the problem and understand our discouragement with the Council, but she said "this is bad news" and asked how we expect the Council to improve if we remove ourselves from the process. She extended her empathy with our disappointments, particularly noting Belgium's frustration when in the March session the Council did not renew the mandate for an independent expert for the Congo. Chainaye stated there is a risk in Geneva when other countries push initiatives the EU and US do not like, but these countries have more votes on the Council; these countries can also promote their positions in the UNGA's Third Committee. She also wondered whether some US people in Geneva would leave.

¶2. (SBU) Chainaye reiterated that without the US participating in Council meetings, it would be more difficult for the EU to end abuses and make changes. She noted Belgium is not a member of the HRC but works through the EU and takes the EU position on the issues. In 2009 Belgium will be a candidate to become a voting member on the Council and would appreciate USG support for their candidacy.

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